

# The Wondrous



A Fastaval scenario  
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### *Colophon:*

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## Introduction

*The Wondrous* is a feel-good drama about leaving loneliness behind and wanting to have someone in your life who can help you feel safe and accept you for who you are. It is a scenario about the experience of not fitting within the norms and society and about daring to reach out and letting others into your life. Focus is on the small things in life that makes a difference for others.

The scenario centres around four people who all feels that society is looking down at them, because the way they perceive the world is different from the norm. We follow their journey from feeling left out to finding community with others who, like themselves, need someone to talk to. And we follow how they slowly come to understand, that you don't need to be normal in order to be accepted.

The four characters are the centre of the scenario. The characters are:

Peter, an older gentleman, with osteoporosis.

Ivy, a woman with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD).

Martin, a young hypochondriac with a phobia for bacteria.

Louise, a young unusually tall woman with social anxieties.

It is not the aim of the scenario to tell how the characters are cured of their difficulties, but to show how they can be accepted as they are, if they dare to reach out and find someone to be close to because of (rather than despite of) their wondrous quirks.

The players shift between playing their characters and portraying the surrounding city. The surrounding city changes during the scenario and represent the way in which the characters experience the changes in their lives. It shows how the character's view on their surroundings changes as they move away from their loneliness and start to notice new and more positive details instead of focussing on the negative.

The scenario has three types of scenes, each with a specific playstyle and focus:

*Location scenes*, in which characters interact with each other at five defined locations, while the players whose characters are not in the scene helps by portraying the surroundings and set the mood.

*Everyday life scenes*, in which focus is on one of the characters, showing that character's daily rituals. These scenes consist mostly of descriptions and centres around the interaction between each character and its surroundings (described by the other players).

*Loneliness scenes*, which is centred around each character's relation to their own loneliness. These scenes are more abstract and visualizes the characters inner life rather than their outer actions.

The three types of scenes show both the outer and inner developments of the characters relations to themselves, each other and the world around them.

One of the most important themes in this scenario is the wondrous or curious. The wondrous elements in the scenario is there to highlight the characters unique and strange view on the world. They are presented in the scenario through the way in which the four characters all

notice and react to things that would not matter to anyone else. This comes into play both through the players description of the surrounding city and through the characters own observations. The wondrous element contributes to create a more nuanced portrait of the characters and to the scenarios feel-good genre.

The scenario consists of five acts. All the mechanics used in the scenario is practiced in the first act (act 0) so that the players learn how to play the different types of scenes and can feel confident about the format. Act 0 begins with the casting and distribution of characters. The players experience of the workshop is rooted in their character. The exercises are an integrated part of the story, which is why the workshop is designed as a separate act. The following acts consist of pre-planned scenes, which are described in details in the scene catalogue.

### **Focus on the little things**

The scenario takes place in an undefined, present day city. The focus is on small, everyday situations. We follow the kind of habits and routines that is a big part of life for most people. The way in which most days are alike. A specific order to follow when getting ready in the morning. A specific route which is always followed when going to work or specific stores to shop in. All these little things that are such a given, that we no longer notice, but which play an essential part in how we experience our everyday world. This is a scenario about the way in which small things can change daily life and the way we experience the world around us and maybe also ourselves.

*The Wondrous* has a slow development. The story takes place over the span of a longer period in the lives of the characters. The changes are subtle, but important rather than big and dramatic. It is the inner, emotional life which is central. How a nod from a stranger is answered with a smile, which leads to a “hi” and maybe slowly grows into a friendship. The scenario aims for a playstyle that makes it feel natural that the four characters over time begins to open up to each other. It is the emotional and social development which should feel relatable to the players.

At the beginning of the scenario, the four characters have seen each other before, but never talked to each other. They all attend the monthly literature event at the local culture house and have all seen each other on these occasions. Besides the culture house, the characters are also brought together at four other locations in the scenario, so that their paths begin to cross more and more often. The other locations are: The Park, The Bus Stop, The Supermarket and the Waiting room at the doctor’s office (GP’s office). Ordinary places that everybody visits once in a while. At these locations the characters can slowly begin to help each other in little ways. And it is at these locations the characters will have their first exchange of words and begin to develop longer and deeper conversations. The five locations are glimpses of the characters everyday life. These are the locations where we follow them. The characters can of course refer to other places or situations, but we don’t see them in the scenario.

## **The mood**

To illustrate the mood of the scenario, here follows a short episode from the culture house. This text is also used later on, as a part of the casting (see appendix 2)

*Somewhere in the world, in a city filled with people, streets, parks, houses and homes, is an old house which has for a long time functioned as a culture house for the local people in the area. It has not changed much in the past 10 years, but it is nice and clean and the atmosphere is warm and friendly.*

*The culture house hosts a lot of events and one of them is a literature night, which is taking place on the first Tuesday of every month. Each month a new book is in focus. Parts of the book is being read out loud and afterwards the book is being discussed. These events have a shifting group of attendances, but there are four participants who faithfully attend each month.*

*The first one to arrive is a young man. He is in good shape, his eyes are attentive and his presence friendly, but there is also something nervous about him. He is keeping a polite distance to others; he looks slightly panicky when someone coughs and he is constantly using hand sanitizer. After arriving he immediately begins to arrange the chairs for the literature night. That is his job. He prepares the room and makes it look nice.*

*The next one to arrive is a woman with an attentive look in her eyes and a kind of precision in her movements. She always arrives at the exact same time and take the same seat. She gets a cup of coffee, adds milk and stir the coffee 16 times anti-clockwise. Then she slowly exhales and if you were to observe her closely, you would see how she slowly relaxes.*

*At this time an elderly gentleman has often arrived and sat down for a short rest on the couch in the hallway outside the room. He is nicely dressed. He has an aura of dignity where you keep your distance, but his eyes are curious and closely follows everything that is going on. If you look closely you can see how tired he is and how little energy is left in his body, but he does his best to hide it.*

*The last one to arrive is a young woman, who arrives shortly before the event starts and take a seat in the back of the room. She is unusually tall, but crouches and does her best not to draw attention. Despite her height, she is good at remaining unnoticed. She blends in and does like everybody else, but her eyes are unusually intelligent and behind the shy surface there are secret dreams and moments which no one else sees.*

*Once a month these four people meet for the literature night. They all feel like strangers. They all feel different and left out. They don't know each other yet, but they soon will.*

## Structure

The scenario is divided into five acts. Act 1-4 have a set scene-structure (which we will describe later on), while act 0 stands out by taking the form of a workshop. In act 0 the players find their characters, collaborate on creating the locations and learns how to play the different types of scenes. The players are handed their characters in the beginning of act 0 and use the characters in all the exercises throughout the act.

Then follows act 1-4 where the players play pre-defined scenes. Each of these four acts has specific themes which guides the players through the story.

The order of the themes is designed to create an emotional journey away from the sense of loneliness. They build a story which begins with mostly negative emotions and ends in the positive emotions as the scenario is a feel-good drama. The themes are not meant as instructions for the emotional states of the characters, but as a guideline for the players highlighting the focus of each act. The themes are:

<i>Act 1</i>	<i>Act 2</i>	<i>Act 3</i>	<i>Act 4</i>
Alienation	Insecurity	Helpfulness	Safety
Loneliness	Hope	Acknowledgement	Joy
Limitations	Reaching out	Community	Equal minded

In appendix 6 there is a list with themes which should be cut out and presented in each act. Replace the themes from the previous act with the new themes when the new act starts.

There are no themes for act 0, but where act 1-4 goes from the negative towards the positive emotions, act 0 has the opposite structure. The exercises in act 0 generally starts positive and then gradually begins to focus more and more on negative emotions. The act slowly presents the players to negative elements such as loneliness and alienation, so that these emotions feels present to the players when act 1 begins.

## The story

The structure of *The Wondrous* is built around four of the monthly literature events in the culture house. In between these the life of the characters is slowly weaved together as they begin to meet each other more and more often at the other locations around town.

The characters all participates in the literature events in act 1 and 2, but in act 3 the literature event gets cancelled for good, thereby removing the foundation for the regular meeting between all the characters. In the last act, it is up to the characters whether they are still seeing each other or has created a new tradition, (maybe someone invited the others for coffee) and where they might meet on the night where the culture event used to take place. In a final epilogue scene, the players reveal whether the characters still see each other.

As a facilitator you should not give away the story to the players in advance, but let them experience the story unfold as they play the scenario.

## **The Characters**

There are four player characters in *The Wondrous*. All four are people who are part of our current society. They have dreams and longings like everyone else, but society generally looks down at them for thinking and acting in a way that does not follow the norm.

All four has ended up slowly isolating themselves for different reasons and no longer have any close relations, but deep down they all want someone with whom to share their problems and experiences. But it is difficult to dare to reach out, when they for so long have experienced society's prejudices and critique.

The scenario tries to provide a glimpse into some deep personalities and their unique strangeness. The strangeness is a big part of all of the characters, although not in a way which would get the characters hospitalized or unable to go outside a door. The four characters are just having difficulties living “normal” lives. It is important to note, that the point of the scenario is not for the characters to try to get well. It is to meet others who accept them as they are and who struggle with similar problems in their everyday life.

### *Who are they?*

Peter is an older gentleman who have had osteoporosis all of his life. Osteoporosis is a disease which makes all your bones very fragile so that they easily break or bend. He has had to arrange his whole life in a way which would allow him to move carefully, not stumbling over things and to avoid situations where others might accidentally bump into him. But this have also taught him to be good at observing others and read their intentions. And he makes up stories of all the people he observes.

Ivy is a woman who has obsessions (also known as OCD). Obsessions are thoughts which drives you to perform specific actions repeatedly or in a very specific manner to make sure that it will not cause something bad to happen. Ivy's everyday life is heavily influenced by her own systems and rules, which she follows without exception. She finds the lives of other people to be chaotic and she does not perceive her systems as a disadvantage for herself. She is good at recognizing patterns and she is very structured.

Martin is a younger man who has a phobia for germs as well as being a hypochondriac. The phobia makes him constantly scared of catching contagious, deadly diseases and being a hypochondriac makes him think that he is already sick (which he is not). He imagines germs being everywhere so he tries to avoid touching things or people. But he is very friendly and has a strong desire to help others.

Louise is an unusually tall younger woman, who suffers from social anxiety. She is not deformed and her limbs are not out of proportions, she is just really tall. Her social anxiety makes her afraid to step out of line in social interactions and she thinks, that others perceive her as a monster. She is also very intelligent and good at coming up with solutions to complex problems.

This would be a good time for you to read the characters. You can find them in appendix 1.

## **Basic mechanics**

This scenario can be played in any location. It does not require a table, but preferably several chairs that the players can move around to create the different location of the scenario (symbolizing for example a park bench or store shelves), for the players to play within.

The five locations do not each need an exclusive place in the room, as they are used one at a time, but the waiting room should be played in a smaller space than the supermarket.

In order to help the players feel an ownership towards the city in which is scenario take place, they will get to take part in defining the five locations (the waiting room, the supermarket, the bus stop, the park and the culture house). This will happen as part of the exercises in act 0.

## **Scene types**

### *Location scenes*

Location scenes takes place at one of the scenarios five locations. In these scenes the players move around as their characters and the locations are physically created by letting objects (like chairs or tables) act as details in the location. The players don't have to mime all their actions, but they should walk or sit as their character and imitate the characters body language.

In these scenes the characters can interact with each other and, alongside that, the players can describe further details about the location. A player can for example (as a kind of side note) make a short description of something the character observes or experiences during or after a conversation or while interacting.

Not all characters are part of all scenes. The players who are not in the scene can, if they wish, act out or describe part of the location. They should be aware not to draw too much attention, as the focus of the scene should be on the characters who take part in it.

An example of the surroundings: A player walking past one of the characters in the scene and bumping into that person. Or describing the noise from the air conditioner or a flock of birds.

### *Everyday life scenes*

Everyday life scenes describe different everyday situations in the characters' lives and how these changes as the characters move away from their loneliness. In these scenes only one of the characters is in focus at a time. The scene is about the characters interactions with its surroundings and the way the character perceives the world.

The way in which it is played is like this: the player with the character in focus in the scene (the focus person) stands still surrounded by the other three players. The other three players play the world surrounding the focus person. The focus person describes a situation from its daily life, for example how the character leaves its home in the morning. The focus person



describes its actions but can also describe thoughts and feelings. The person can add little wondrous details and the player decides what the character notices or pay attention to as the scene progresses.

After having described for a short moment, the focus person lets the other players add situations, people, experiences or other details for the focus person to react to. The other players take turns adding inputs, and the turn shifts clockwise so that the players know when it is their turn to speak. The other players should let themselves be influenced by the themes for the act to help create the slow change in the characters perception on the world, which happens scene by scene.

Throughout the acts, these scenes create a development of how the characters perceives or notices their surroundings. So even though the more positive themes are only introduced in the later acts, the interactions with the surroundings might have had positive elements before that. The character has just not noticed the positive aspects and that is why we don't see them. The players portraying the surrounding world creates the world as the focus person experiences it right now, which changes with the new themes in later acts.

Example form a playtest: in Act 1 Peter describes how he walks down the stairs going down to the street. One of the other players describes how the steps suddenly looks like deep chasms which Peter has to cross and how the steps slowly slide apart and the gap in between them seems to go on for miles. In response Peter describes how he starts to sweat and has to grab tight with both hands on the rail not to fall into the chasms.

Martin describes in act 2, how there is always dog shit in front of the main entrance to his home. One of the other players describes how a new sign has been put up with the words "please clean up after your dog" and that a small box with bags for dog poo removal has been placed next to it. Martin responds, that it is nice, that the caretaker has followed his request.

In act 4 Louise describes how she is waiting for the bus. One of the other players describes how the bus arrives and how an unusually tall man in a top hat gets out, smiles and greets her. Louise describes how she straightens her back and returns the smile.

### *Loneliness scenes – (Meta scenes)*

In this type of scene, all four characters are present, but they don't interact. These scenes focus on the characters personal relation to their own loneliness. It is a form of meta scenes. The players start in separate corners facing the walls. In these scenes the walls represent loneliness. The characters start to describe their relation to their loneliness, all speaking at the same time. They can (if they like) turn to face the room, symbolizing that they are turning away from their loneliness. The possibilities of the players within these scenes progresses through the acts, allowing the players to take new actions in each act. All actions that can be performed in these scenes has symbolic meaning.

Later on, in the scenario the players can walk away from the wall towards the middle of the room to show that they are leaving the loneliness and approaching the others. And later yet, they can look at the other players and maybe even get eye contact and talk to them, (although the others will not react or answer, as they are talking about their own loneliness). In the end, the players can take each other's hands if they feel especially connected to other characters.

The loneliness scenes provide a kind of status on each character's relation to loneliness and in the end of these scenes, the players are asked to look around and notice the placement of the other players. This gives the players a chance to meta communicate to each other about how the inner thoughts and emotions of each character gradually changes.

Because this is a feel-good scenario most players ought to turn away from the wall during the span of the scenario and maybe go to the middle of the room. And maybe even end up all holding hands in the end of the scenario.

Example from the playtest: Martin was still facing the wall after the second Loneliness scene. This led to the other players trying harder in the following act to reach out to him and try to help him. Which meant that in the next Loneliness scene Martin turned away from the wall and took a step towards the middle of the room, towards the others.

### **Gamemaster/facilitator responsibilities**

Your task in this scenario is to explain the scenario, facilitate the exercises in act 0, set the scenes and cut them when they are finished. Act 0, with the casting and exercises, is explained in appendix 2 and there is a Summary sheet for the act in appendix 3 that you can use when facilitating.

The set up for each scene is in the scene catalogue in appendix 5. You can end the scenes when you find it appropriate, but remember that the scenario has a slow progression, so a bit of awkward silence is ok. The players need enough time to be able to reach out, offer their help or create situations where they can do something for each other. On the other hand, there is a lot of scenes, so each scene can't go on for too long.

In the scenes in the culture house, there is a non-player character which you play or describe, depending on how you want to do it. It is an employee named Harriet, who coordinate the literature nights and the authors that attend to read from their books, and the one who knows about delays. Harriet should not take up too much space in the scenes, it is the characters who are in focus. Harriet is the only non-player character in the scenario.

You are welcome to help describe the characters surroundings in the Location and Everyday life scenes, as a way to guide the players or create the foundation for situations that are relevant for the themes of the act.

There are five playlists for *The Wondrous*, one for each act. The music is meant as backdrop and support the themes of each act. The playlists for act 1-4 start with the same number, making it a kind of theme for the Loneliness scenes. This does not mean, that you have to coordinate the length of the scene to fit the music, just start the playlist at the beginning of the act and let it run until the act has ended. We recommend that you use it if possible.

Playlist for act 0: <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/29qkjwLzmTlGmlkNv2wau6>

Playlist for act 1: <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/5Q9j3ds7K6QUox3Ki2Mz37>

Playlist for act 2: <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/6zcJZjmLxFCLqR11yIyNaC>

Playlist for act 3: <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3BWvnzw74Pzn02Vs2xzfet>

Playlist for act 4: <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/629qHRK15v1KRPA5sBfS28>

## Scene overview

*The Wondrous* has a sequence of pre-defined scenes which leads the players on the journey away from loneliness. Each act has a different structure and to get a feel of that structure here follows a brief overview over the scenes. The more in-depth descriptions can be found in the scene catalogue in appendix 5 and the summary sheet in appendix 4.

### *Act 0 - see appendix 2*

Act 0 consist of a series of exercises which guide the players into character, helps them create the different locations and practice the mechanics which will be used in the following acts. The casting of the characters also takes place during this act.

### *Act 1 – themes: Alienation, Limitations, Loneliness*

This act starts with a Loneliness scene to highlight the characters initial state of mind. The following scenes shift between location - and everyday life scenes, ending with a scene in the Culture House where all characters are present. Everyday life scenes centre around how the characters move from safe situations and into something unsafe.

In this act it is completely fine for the characters not to have long conversations and the scenes can easily have some quiet time.

### *Act 2 – themes: Insecurity, Daring to reach out, Hope*

This act has the same structure as act 1, starting with a Loneliness scene and followed by shifting location - and everyday life scenes. But in this act the characters are parred in new constellations. Everyday life scenes in this act focuses on the way in which the characters start to relate a bit to each other and even begin to do things for each other.

### *Act 3 – themes: Helpfulness, Community, Acknowledgement*

Starts with a Loneliness scene, where the players can make eye-contact and speak at the others (without having a real conversation). There are only location scenes in this act, ending at the Culture House where the characters hear that the Literature event has been cancelled.

### *Act 4 – themes: Safety, Equal minded, Joy*

This begins, as the other act, with a loneliness scene- This time, the players are able to hold hands. Then follows four everyday life scenes. Then an open scene, where the players decide what is happening. This scene takes place where the literature night would normally take place, and the players decides where the characters are and what they are doing.

The act ends with a Loneliness scene which represent an epilogue, where the players through their placement in the room, can show whether or not they will continue to see the others.

## Setting up

Before the players arrive, you should cut out the themes so that they are ready to be placed in the room in each act.

When the players are ready you can start by reading out loud the pitch to give the players a sense of what to expect (you can find this in appendix 7).

- Pitch

Then explain to the players, that the focus of this scenario is the everyday situations and that emphasis is on the small things.

- The focus is on everyday situations
- And the small things.

Give the players a feel of the structure with the five acts and explain, that there will be themes for four of them which will be placed so they are visible for all. Tell them, that they will get their characters in the beginning of the workshop and that they in the workshop will create the locations and become familiar with the characters.

- Five acts
- pre-defined scenes in four of the acts (act 0 is workshop)
- Themes for act 1-4
- Characters as part of act 0

Then explain the three types of scenes:

- *Location scenes*: Five set locations. Characters can interact and talk to each other, but the play can very well be subtle and quiet in the beginning.
- *Everyday life scenes*: One character in focus, the rest describes the surrounding world. The surrounding world uses the themes for the act and is a representation of how the character experience the situation (it is seen/described from the characters point of view).
- *Loneliness scenes*: Meta scenes about the characters relation to their own loneliness. The walls represent the loneliness.

Best of luck with the scenario!

# **Characters**

## **- appendix 1**

# Ivy

## The mornings

The alarm clock bips at 6.10 AM.

At 6.15 I am out of bed.

I spend 22 minutes in the bathroom bathing, getting dressed (using the clothes I laid on the chair the night before), and brushing my teeth (left to right, up then down).

At 6.37 I put the coffee on and make breakfast (cheese and butter on a slice of white bread), and when the coffee is done, I take a seat in front of the window and look out at the street and the early morning. I put milk in my coffee, and I stir it 16 times clockwise, then I blow on it and take the first sip of the day. At this point, the clock has normally reached 6.47 and I have 23 minutes before I need to leave.

I love the mornings. They are calm and harmonic, and nothing goes wrong because everything is carefully planned for. I can relax when I am sitting with my coffee in front of the window. This is a place where I can let my mind wander.

Outside my window is a bird's nest. It is inhabited and I watch the birds fly in and out. That makes me happy. It reminds me of a fairy tale I once read, but of which I remember very little.

Sometimes I watch people on the street and I imagine what it must feel like to be like them. They live strange, chaotic lives. They let everything slide, wakes up at different times and don't have systems for how to brush their teeth or stir their coffees. But despite that, they often seem happy. I hear them laugh on the bus and I see them smile and greet each other when they walk past each other on the street. Sometimes they can, of course, be angry or irritable, but I would be too if I lived a life without systems. I don't understand them, and I never have. But they apparently understand each other and that is something I envy them. Most of the time I don't mind being alone (all in all it is easier that way), but I sometimes miss someone to talk to. I dream of knowing people with whom I could sit in silence without feeling awkward or left out.

When the time draws near to 7.05, my heart begins to beat faster. Then I know that I will have to leave soon.

I quickly wash my cup and plate and put on my jacket. I check that the light is turned off in the living room and turned on in the hallway and then I walk out the door of my apartment.

I lock the door behind me. Then I unlock it and lock it once more. And unlock it and lock it. I have to lock and unlock the door 7 times, The 8<sup>th</sup> time I lock the door it remains locked and I pull the door 3 times to make sure that it is really locked. It has to be that way. If I don't do it properly, it is going to annoy me for the rest of the day. If I do the counting wrong, I will have to go back in, take off my jacket, put it on again and start over.

## The systems

The world outside my front door is chaotic, but I have my systems to help make sense of it.

There are 37 steps down to the front door. I count them each morning. The 22<sup>nd</sup> step has a blue spot, which I always wonder about when I pass it. It looks pretty. It is shaped like a bird.

On the way to the bus stop, I keep to the left side of the sidewalk. If someone approaches from the opposite direction, I look down and insist on staying to the left even if they try to go left as well. I know that they are staring at me. That is why I look down. Not to meet their gaze.

I don't like to bother anyone, but I have to follow my systems. They are important to me. They let the world make sense. I have been recommended to see a psychologist, to help me get rid of my systems, but I don't see them as an illness. They take up a lot of time and they make my life more difficult. But that does not mean that they are bad for me.

I take the bus to work. I have my little routines on the way. While I wait for the bus, I need to sit all the way to the left on the bench at the bus stop. If that seat is taken, I have to wait until the bus has arrived and then go and sit on the bench for a moment. I need to sit there for at least 25 seconds. Sometimes that makes me miss the bus, but that is ok because I always leave home in good time and can catch the next bus. And I like the bus stop. The words "Never quit" is painted in graffiti on the wall to the right. It feels comforting, almost as if the words were painted there for me.

### Work

I work at in office with a lot of people. I like my work a lot. I make spreadsheets and organize budgets and other administrative jobs, but I mostly keep to myself. I am fine when I am sitting at my desk. All is in order there and I am normally never disturbed. My colleagues talk and laugh and sometimes I try to take part, but it is difficult. They are nice enough, but I know that they think I am weird. I have not told them about my systems. They would not understand. I can hide most of it, like when I count the steps to the bathroom or the coffee maker (I need to take precisely 12 steps to get to the bathroom door and 21 to the coffee maker). But sometimes I wish that I had someone I could talk to and laugh together with.

### Normal days

All my days are adjusted to my systems. When I shop for groceries, I need to pay at the counter furthest to the left. To get a better chance for the left counter to be open, I found a smaller supermarket that only has three counters. If the left counter is not open, I have to wait. I pretend to look at groceries while discreetly keeping an eye on the counter to see if it opens up.

It can be time consuming to get the shopping done. I need to find the different items in a certain order, first fruit and vegetables, then bread, then dairy products, canned food and lastly all non-food products. Unfortunately, this order no longer fits the way the store is organized, so I have to go back and forth several times.

I always pause at the canned tomatoes and make sure that they are all aligned (with the image of the tomato facing outwards). I began doing this on one of the occasions when I was waiting for the left counter to open. And now I can't stop it.

If something happens that prevents me from turning all the canned tomatoes, it can throw me off my game for days. I get nervous and upset and I can't find inner peace. It can take days to recover from this type of breaks in the routine. Unless I can make up an excuse to go grocery shopping again and fix the canned tomatoes to restore peace and order in my inner world.

## The Culture Centre

My home is my secure base where all is organized into systems and all is as it should be, but there is one other place, where I feel safe despite the presence of other people with their mess and chaos. It is an old Culture Centre which I have frequented for many years. It is familiar and organized. They have a board which shows all the upcoming events of the Culture Centre two month in advance.

The furniture is the same as always, nothing has been moved or changed. There is an old, blue grandfather clock, which still shows the time precisely. I don't know if anyone is setting the clock but being able to trust that it shows the time accurately, makes me feel safe.

And there is a bookcase with old books which always aligns perfectly. When I arrive at the Culture Centre I always make sure that the books are organized in the usual way, and if they are not, I place them in order depending on the colour of their bindings.

For the last five months, the Culture Centre has hosted a literary event on the first Tuesday of the month. Each month a new author is invited to read out loud from their book, which is then afterwards discussed. I have been at all these events. It has become part of my routine.

I always arrive early to make sure I can get the seat furthest to the left and in the back of the room. Before I set down, I get a cup of coffee. I stir it 16 times clockwise and then I take the first sip and I relax. I watch as people enter the room and get comfortable. There are always a lot of new faces but some has also become familiar.

There is a polite young man who often uses hand sanitizer. He is always setting up the chairs as I arrive. I would like to offer him my help but explaining to him my system for how to set up chairs (left side first, one row at a time, starting at the back of the room), feels stressful.

He is doing it almost right, anyway. He always starts in the back of the room to the left, placing my chair as the first one. And he uses hand sanitizer for every third chair, which is also nice and familiar by now. He always finishes on time.

Then there is the older gentleman who always moves very carefully. He makes me feel safe because he always arrives in the same way. I watch him arrive through the door to the hallway. He always arrives early, and he always sits on the couch in the hall for a moment before entering the room. Two months ago, he nodded at me and I nodded at him. I knew immediately that this could be dangerous, as this nod could become part of my system. It is very vulnerable to let others become part of the system because they can be so unpredictable. I was very nervous when he arrived at last month's literature event, but fortunately, he nodded at me again. I nodded back and all was as it should be once more.

The last regular guest at the literature events is a young woman. She always arrives late and sits in the back of the room close to the door and close to where I am sitting. She is tall, but crouches which make her look smaller. I always wanted to be taller. I think that everything must be a bit easier to comprehend when seen from above.

The tall woman is there every month. Maybe I will nod at her someday and make her part of my system.

The literature events are by now the highpoint of my month. After a while I often stop listening to the book being read out loud and instead, I close my eyes and I imagine that I am like everyone else and that I am sitting together with friends. And this one time a month, it almost feels true.



### Shortly on family

I have never been close to my parents, but I still talk to my sister occasionally. But as my systems have become more set, it has become harder to meet and share experiences.

### Summary

Ida is a young woman with OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder), whose inner systems takes up most of her time. She never received any treatment and has never gotten an official diagnosis, as she has always found ways to make her life function. She is structured, thorough and reliable and she does not want to change who she is.

She misses having a community with other people but perceives them as chaotic which makes it hard for her to accept them into her scheduled life.

Once a month she attends the literature event at the local Culture Centre and that is the highlight of her month, as this is a social situation, she can handle being part of.

# Martin

## The germs

I always hated being sick. I hate the feeling of something being wrong inside my body. I feel it right away as a sneaking uncomfortableness, an alien force making its way into my system.

I get scared when I get sick. Sickness easily escalates. It can paralyze you or permanently damage your senses. And it can kill you.

As far back as I remember, I have been afraid of germs. I have this image in my mind from a cartoon I once watched, of germs being portrayed as an army of small, discussing creatures, trying their best to penetrate the immune system, which desperately tried to defend itself.

I always had a love for life. I love being alive and I love sharing this joy with others. And knowing that life is so amazing, makes it hard for me to understand how people can be so bad at taking care of themselves.

## The breakdown

I do my best not to get sick and not to infect anyone else. I eat healthy, I exercise, and I do what I can to avoid germs. For many years I tried to be discreet about it. I know that my fear of sickness and germs is not normal. I tried to discreetly make sure, that the people I love was healthy and did not get sick. I made sure to make hand sanitizer available, bring extra scarfs for my friends when going out on cold days and so on. I fought hard to keep people healthy and I fought alone. And not only did I fight the germs, but I also had to fight the prejudice and ridicule from people calling me a hypochondriac and my fear of germs a phobia. In the end, it became too much, and I could no longer take it. The illnesses, which I had held at bay for so long, all came rushing in.

My doctor did not acknowledge the illnesses. Instead, he called it a breakdown. But I could feel how the germs got a hold on different parts of my body and occupied them with symptoms such as coughing, fever, pains in my joints, stomach cramps, migraines and other small illnesses which could each be the symptom of much more dangerous diseases. Diseases which could spread and escalate to fatal stages. I could have died, but I pulled through by isolating myself, staying in bed, keeping warm and eating all I could find of healthy food, pills and vitamin drink.

It is one and a half years since the sickness hit me. Even though the doctor did not understand the severity of the situation, he did understand that something was wrong. I got on paid sick leave from my job as a fitness instructor and personal trainer (a job I really liked because it enabled me to help others to get healthy and avoid sickness). Later on, I got on government sickness benefits and it has been that way since.

### The friends and the sickness

To be on sickness benefits is not the worst. It gives me time and peace to take care of myself.

But it can also be lonely. I don't see my friends as often as I used to. They don't invite me as often as they did before. I assume that it has to do with my sickness (the thing my doctor called a breakdown). Maybe they are afraid of getting affected. Or maybe they are afraid that I can only talk about diseases and germs.

And maybe they are right. It does take up a lot of my time. I take a lot of precautions when I go out. I almost always wear gloves to avoid getting germs on my hands. I wear a scarf (even in the summer) which, if necessary, can be used to cover my nose and mouth if someone nearby starts sneezing. And I always bring a hand sanitizer. I get nervous around other people. They don't care about germs or the risk of infection. So, I often end up declining invitations from my friends. I am always so happy to receive an invitation and I almost always accept right away, but then as time draws nearer, it gets harder and harder for me to find the courage and energy to go. The last couple of times I got invited I did not even have the energy to cancel, I just did not show up.

I used to be so much for so many. I used to be the one they confessed in and who always remembered their birthdays, always brought small presents or send greetings. I miss that. I still do what I can, but it is a lot less than it used to be.

The other day I heard, that a friend of mine had become seriously ill. I wanted to visit him, but I could not face up to it, so I decided to send him a gift instead. I found his favourite chocolate, a book with poems, that I personally love and a cd with ocean sounds (because I know he loves sailing). But as I was about to send the gift, it occurred to me, that he might feel obliged to come by and say thank you, once he got better. And then suddenly a narrative started unfolding in my mind: he would come by before being completely well, sneeze in his hand without noticing, transfer the germs to the cup of coffee (which I would of course offer him) and then when I took the cup to clean it, the germs would immediately attach me, the disease would occupy my body and within a month I would be dead! I choose to send the gift anonymously. I just wrote, "from a friend".

I follow my friends on social media, but I seldom reach out to them. And even with social media and little gifts, I can feel that my old friendships have faded away. It is hard for me when they don't accept me as I am. I can no longer hide my fear of germs and diseases. It is too difficult and exhausting. But I miss intimacy and closeness.

### A normal day

I find it easy to pass the time. When I wake up in the morning, I always use a moment to notice how I am feeling. At the side of my bed is a book of diseases. If I feel anything out of the ordinary, I look up the symptoms. If necessary, I find more details online, but to be honest, I trust my book more. I read about all the potential diseases and which pills or treatments I could take. If the disease is really serious, I call my doctor, but I try to limit the calls as much as possible (only 2-3 per week).

I write in my notebook about the diseases I need to pay attention to and which vitamins/medicine I should take. If there is something, I need which I don't already have at home, I write it on the shopping list on my refrigerator. I often draw a little flower or a smiling face next to it, to make it

look more friendly because if the shopping list looks friendly it somehow becomes easier to leave home. I try to combine all my shopping with my trips to the doctor to avoid leaving home more often than absolutely necessary.

When I am at home, I clean the apartment, read in my book of diseases, cook healthy food and exercise. I have a treadmill in the living room, and I run at least 20 kilometres each day (unless the disease is so bad that I have to keep in bed). I have a playlist with mixed nature sounds, which I listen to while running. Sometimes I close my eyes and I imagine that I am running around the world at superspeed while experiencing the most amazing places on the way.

When I go out, I put on plenty of clothes. Gloves, scarf and a hand sanitizer in the pocket. I try as far as possible to keep distance to others and to not touch anything. I avoid going at times when the store will be full and I know exactly what to get, so I quickly can get in and out. If the weather is good, I sometimes go for a run in the park. The park is on the way to the doctor, so it also happens, that I take the run through the park to avoid a bus full of snotty people even though the weather is cold.

I hate being at the doctor's office. The place is sterile but filled with sick people. I have changed doctor several times during the last couple of years. I finally succeeded in finding a doctor who took my diseases seriously. She never called me a hypochondriac and instead of telling me that I don't have any diseases she says, "right now I can't find the cause of your symptoms". And then she recommends some pills or tells me that I just have to keep taking care of myself.

I think it would be easier for me being out if I could be less helpful and friendly. One day a child asked me for directions. I could not hear properly, so I had to place my head closer to the head of the child and its small, red snotnose. After that, I had to spend several days in bed with a severe cold.

Balancing the wish to help others and the need to protect myself is hard. I can't help smiling at others and try to be polite. If I see someone drop something, I always pick it up. If I meet a homeless person on the street, I always give some money. I am getting good at tossing coins so I can avoid getting too close...

### The Culture Centre

There is one place beside my home, where I enjoy coming. It is the local Culture Centre, which is placed a couple of streets from my home. I know the place inside out, with all its little peculiar details. There is the old, blue grandfather clock which I always set when I arrive. It has a unique sound and some weird little ornaments. I found the key to the grandfather clock hidden away in one of the clocks little ornaments and since then I have felt responsible to make sure that the clock is always showing the time precisely. And there is the bookshelf with the old books which I make sure to dust off and arrange nicely. I am always very careful not to damage the fragile pages, but old books collect dust and dust is filled with germs.

The Culture Centre is always clean and nice. I have been helping out there for years and even though I am not there as often as I used to be, I still help out at some specific events. I have taken the responsibility to set up for the monthly literature event. I make coffee, set up chairs and clean

the space after everyone else has left. It is easy and doable, and I can keep to myself. The literature events consist of an author reading out loud of her or his book and then a discussion.

Even though I never talk to anyone, I still get a sense of community around the literature events.

There are always new people coming, but also some regulars. There are three people in particular who I always notice at the literature events. I almost feel that I know them and even though I have never talked to them, I almost feel like we are friends.

The first one arriving is always the same lady. She comes at the exact same time each month, well before anyone else. She arrives while I am arranging the chairs and she sits down at the same chair each time (in the back, furthest to the left), so I always make sure to put that chair out first. I have been secretly watching her. She likes routines, so I try to set the chairs in the same order each month. I really wish that I could talk to her, but she keeps to herself and taking the initiative requires a bit of courage.

The second one to arrive is an elderly gentleman. He always takes a rest in the couch in the hallway before entering the room. He is obviously a bit fragile, but as far as I can tell, he is not sick (at least not in any contagious way). I discreetly bring him a cup of coffee when he has taken his seat. He seems like the type who wants to take care of himself and don't like asking for help, so to make it seem more natural, I get a cup of coffee for myself as well and sit down and drink it next to him. I feel safe by his side. When he coughs, he always uses a handkerchief and he smells of soap. We sometimes exchange a few words, but we never had a real conversation.

The last one of the usual guests to arrive, is a younger woman who is unusually tall, has intelligent eyes and seems shy. She sneaks in and sits in the back of the room. She seems insecure, so I have tried smiling at her a couple of times, but I don't think she notices.

The literature events are always the highlight of the month. I never feel lonely here. On the contrary, I feel like I belong, despite my diseases and my fear of germs.

### Short on family

I never knew my dad, but I have always been close with my mom. At least until disease and old age took a hold of her and I had to move her to a home for elderly people because I could no longer take care of her. After I got sick myself, I can no longer visit her, but I call her often.

### Summary

Martin is a younger man who suffers from a strong germ phobia as well as hypochondria.

Martin is friendly and has a strong urge to help others, but his fear of germs makes it difficult for him to get close to other people, out of fear of being affected with deadly diseases.

Once a month he is responsible for setting up a literature event in the local Culture Centre and that is always the highlight of the month because it allows him to feel safe in the company of others.

# Peter

## Osteoporosis (fragile bones)

All people have their problems. That is life, they say. Just because things are difficult it does not mean that they ought to be different. Having battles to fight is not the same as needing other people's pity.

I once read a book that made a big impact on me. I don't remember the title or the narrative for that matter, but I remember one of the main characters saying: "No one can take away my dignity". And I took that to heart.

Since I was a child, I have had Osteoporosis. This means that my bones are unusually fragile and easily bends or breaks. It also means that I easily get tired and that I can't walk too far or move too much at a time. They call it an "illness". I don't. I am not ill. I am not in any kind of chronic pain, I just need to be extra attentive and take care not to fall or strain myself.

My body has always been fragile, but it has gotten worse as I got older. I used to be able to work at a desk, but when I reached my forties, my doctor told me, that unless I wanted to die young, I would have to slow down. I resisted for a while, but in the end, I went on early retirement. I guess the doctor's words had made an impact after all. I don't want other people to consider me ill, but I do want to live a long life. I still have much to live for.

## Curiosity and work

I have always read a lot. Deep down I always felt a bit secluded from the rest of the world, because there were so many things I could not do. I spend a lot of time sitting and watching my surroundings and making up little stories about the people I saw. Fortunately, I got a baby sister who was a lot younger than me, so I had someone to whom I could tell my stories.

Shortly before turning 20 I got my first part-time job and that changed everything. The work in itself did not matter (it was an underpaid job at an office), but it allowed me to be among other people and as long as I was careful, I could pretend to be like everybody else. No one needed to take special care of me, because I was paying attention and could take care of myself.

But even though I had now become part of the world, I have never stopped watching my surroundings and the people I encounter. I would like some close friends, but it has become more and more difficult to connect with others as I have gotten older. I don't want to be a burden to anyone, and I don't want anyone's pity or to be perceived as an old, invalid weirdo. It can be easier to retain your dignity at a distance. To gain close relations require the courage to open up and be fragile and I am not sure I can do that anymore... But I often dream about it. I sometimes feel lonely. But that is just one of those things. Everybody has their battles to fight.

### Normal days

I make sure to get out every day. I go to the supermarket (even though I have to have the groceries brought to the door). It is a small supermarket, but it has its funny details. The automatic doors don't open at the same speed and there is a sticker with a smiling three on the inside of the refrigerator door. It does not serve a purpose there, but it has been there for a long time and I often wonder whether it has been forgotten or if it contains a secret message.

In the summer I sometimes sit in the park and read, and I am often at the doctor's office, which is fortunately only a single block away from my home.

But there is especially one place where I really enjoy coming and that is the local Culture Centre. I go there several times a week. It is not far from my home, but I need to plan the route carefully and I always leave in good time.

My legs get tired quickly. And when my legs get tired, I can easily lose balance.

It feels like I lose contact with them. I can no longer trust that they will carry me. When my legs get tired, I have a hard choice to make. If I increase my speed I risk falling over, because it becomes more and more difficult to keep balance. It also becomes harder to avoid the little traps which are always present on streets and sidewalks. Sudden movements or carelessness from other pedestrians. Uneven stones, empty cans, slippery garbage or other items that can make me fall. But on the other hand, if I go slow and don't manage to reach a resting place in time, I risk my legs collapsing underneath me making me fall over.

I hate falling over! It is awkward and embarrassing. I don't have the strength to get myself back on my feet. And I get frightened. And then I have to lie there on the ground, avoiding the pitiful gazes and well-meaning questions from people passing by while I gather the strength to get back up. I do not want anybody's help! That would not be dignified.

I dress respectably. And I take care of my teeth and hair. I keep my clothes neat and iron my jacket and shirt every day. And I keep two polished coins in my inner pocket because of an old superstition (or maybe it was a story I made up, but you can never be too careful). I walk proud with my back straight and make sure not to show when I get tired or find it difficult to keep balance. I smile politely to the people who keep their distance and disapprovingly ignore the ones who walk too close or moves to violently.

I walk with a cane. I have done so for the last 5 years. My doctor has told me several times, that a walker would make my life easier (and has even mentioned the possibility of a wheelchair), but I refuse. At least for as long as I possibly can.

I walk to the Culture Centre each Monday, Friday and Sunday. And the first Tuesday each month. With the exception of my own home, the Culture Centre is the safest and most pleasant place I know.

It has old furniture and a comfortable atmosphere. There is a blue grandfather clock with intricate patterns and ornaments that looks like a secret map or a beautifully drawn letter. And there is an old bookshelf. It has old books about forgotten subjects which I sometimes read, but always quickly give up on, because the language is heavy and slow. But I always place the books in an orderly fashion and sometimes I switch them around just to see if a secret door should open somewhere.

Sometimes the time between Monday and Friday can feel very long. At the Culture Centre, I participate in three different classes: cooking, photography and portrait painting. I never talk to anyone, but there are several other students in each of the classes, to whom I sometimes smile or nod. And who smiles and nod at me. And I know who everybody is. I watch them carefully. I have a good eye for detail. And I like other people. At a distance...

### The literature events

The first Tuesday in each month the Culture Centre is hosting a literature event. For me, that is always the highlight of the month.

The book of the month is being announced in advance, so the ones who want to read it have the time to do so. At the literature event, a couple of chapters is being read out loud by the author and afterwards, there is some loose talk or themed discussion and of course coffee and cake available during the entire event.

I always make sure to read the book in advance. It is a good opportunity to read some interesting works, which I might not otherwise have known about. I never participate in the discussions, instead, I sit and watch the people around me. There are a few people who are always there. Three, in particular, I have noticed.

There is the tall, young woman who sits in the back of the room and who always arrives a little late. She seems shy and insecure. But her eyes are intelligent, and she carefully follows both the reading and the discussions (even though she never says anything). In my personal stories, she is a professor despite her young age. She has discovered a distant solar system but has not told anyone about it yet. She likes keeping her secrets.

Then there is the woman who always sits at the same seat at the wall. She never speaks and at the beginning of the evening there is something nervous about her, but as the night progresses, she relaxes more and more. When the evening is coming to an end, she gets tense again. There is something in her eyes. I think she is a dreamer like me. She doesn't really listen to the reading, but I think she is sitting there creating inner worlds. And I wish I could hear what she is sitting there dreaming about. I sometimes nod at her and then she gives me a nod back and that makes both of us happy.

And there is the young man who is setting up the space and cleans up after the literature events. He almost always wears gloves. The only times I have seen him take off the gloves is when he spritzes his hands with a hand sanitizer he apparently always carries in his pocket. Sometimes he gets me a cup of coffee even though I don't ask him to. Then he takes a cup of coffee for himself as well and he sits down next to me and silently drinks it. I like that. I have made up several stories about him. He seems friendly. I imagine that he has the kind of work where he takes care of others. Maybe he is a nurse. Or a secret agent who occasionally saves the world, but who in between his agent duties also makes time for smaller assignments like preparing the literature events.

In my fantasies, the four of us know each other. In there, we are friends who sometimes meet for coffee or talk about the lives we each lead. I know that my stories are probably not true, but whoever my "almost-friends" actually are, I am sure they are way more exciting and complicated than I could ever imagine. Maybe I will ask them sometime.



### Short on family

My parents passed away long ago, but I have my sister and her two teen children. We slowly lost contact, which I think was mostly my fault. I often dream of sitting with my niece and nephew telling them stories as I used to do with my sister growing up.

### Summary

Peter is an older gentleman, who has had osteoporosis his whole life, which means that his bones easily break or bend so that even small accidents can have big consequences. Peter is not in pain and he has no other symptoms, he just always needs to be careful and his body easily tires. He has a great imagination, he likes other people and he is very curious.

Peter walks with a cane, but he has so far refused to get any of the other help supplies, which could have made his life easier. He is afraid that it would get more difficult to keep his dignity if others could see how fragile he actually is.

He often goes to the local Culture Centre and is especially looking forward to the first Tuesday in the month, where he attends the literature event and meet the three people who have caught his curiosity and won their own place in his inner stories.

# Louise

## The height

I hate getting attention. I hate getting attention because I know, that I only get it because of my abnormal height. I often wish that I could find a hole to hide in, but it would have to be a very deep hole to be able to contain me. And I know that I can't hide forever.

Already in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, I was taller than my parents. And it did not stop there. I kept growing until I was higher than everyone else, I know.

There is nothing actually wrong with my body, I am not sick, and I am not in pain, my body parts are not out of proportions. I am just unusually tall.

I almost always have to bend my head when I walk through a door.

I almost always crouch over to seem smaller than I am, but even then, I am still a head taller than people around me. My neck and shoulders have begun to hurt and my doctor tells me to keep my back straight. That is easy for her to say. She is not the one who is abnormal.

I never cared too much about my appearance. I just want to be normal. I can feel people staring at me. I always look away. I look at the sky above me or at the ground far below me. I know, that the stares are not friendly. Children point at me when I pass them. I try to walk silently not to scare them.

Sometimes I feel lonely. I don't have any close friends and I never had a serious boyfriend.

Sometimes I bring a guy home with me. Then we spend the night together and for a short while I feel close to another human being. But I know that it is not going to last. I know, that it is not love and probably not even attraction, but rather a weird fetish for tall women. Some men like feeling small... Most of them are polite enough to ask for my phone number when they leave. I always give them the wrong number. I know, that they are not going to call me anyway and giving them the wrong number allows me to pretend that it is my choice.

It has been many years since I had close friends. It is difficult to get close to others when you can't show them who you are deep down. When I am with other people I most often try to do as they do. To have the same opinions and the same body language. I hide my intelligence and focus on making others feel comfortable. Sometimes I feel invisible. It is better that way. It is better to be invisible than grotesque.

I dream of being accepted for who I am. It would be amazing to have someone with whom I could share my thoughts.

## Work

I have always been intelligent. That is fine. It creates some opportunities. I have a good job which allows me to work from home. I am good at finding solutions to problems that others might not see. I can see connections and bring elements together which might not be obvious to other people. It is

a good skill to have and something which is in great demand. I don't like taking initiative (because that requires me to stand out), so instead, I solve other people's problems. I have clients from all over the world and I communicate with them via online meetings. That is fine. When we are not in the same room, they cannot see how tall I am. I adjust the seat of the chair to be as low as possible and I make sure to angle my computer screen in a way that makes me look normal.

I really like my work. It is wonderful to feel that I am helping others and I love intellectual challenges. It is the social elements that are difficult.

### Normal days

My days are very different. That is fine. I thrive in chaos as long as I know what is expected of me.

Most days I stay at home. When I am alone, I usually feel good. There is a lot of things I enjoy. Music, good movies, good food, little projects. I love to immerse myself and to get swept away in beautiful music or wonderful paintings. Close to my window I have an easel with a painting which I have been working on for years. I love to paint, and I often sit down in front of the painting. I look at it for a while and then I add a detail or changes something which no longer fits in. This is my small, secret world and when I work on the painting, I can totally forget myself. Then I feel like part of everything else and that makes me happy. But as soon as I am out among other people, I feel the gazes and I am reminded that I am too big and that I do not fit in.

I love cooking, but I hate grocery shopping because I am taller than any of the shelves and visible from all over the store. I often buy a lot at once, so I don't have to shop too often and I shop at times when I know that there are not too many other people in the store. I have my online meetings at all times of the day, so my schedule is often blank at times when other people are at work.

I love nature and I love going for walks. There is a beautiful park close to where I live. I sometimes go there to collect my thoughts. I sit in the grass or touch the leaves, closes my eyes, breathe deeply and feel that the world is much larger than me. I discreetly search the ground for beautiful rocks or other small treasures. If I find something, I collect it in a small purse which I always have in my pocket. I like bringing a bit of the park home with me. I love the feeling of the sun on my skin on warm summer days, but when the weather is nice, there is always a lot of people in the park, so I most often goes for walks when the weather is cloudy or rainy. That is also fine. I like the rain.

### The Culture Centre

There is one place where I enjoy coming and that is the local Culture Centre. It has nice, big rooms and the atmosphere is pleasant. I know all the details of the place by now. There is an old, blue grandfather clock with weird ornaments and a reassuring sound. It reminds me of a watch my grandmother had, and its tiny ornaments and funny shapes inspire me to paint. And there is a shelf with old books, which I sometimes read. The language is old-fashioned, but the stories are good and if I don't know what to do about myself, I can always take a book and disappear into the story.

The Culture Centre is hosting a lot of events. I do not like to attend events where I need to participate actively, but I like to attend concerts, talks and readings.

The first Tuesday of every month the Culture Centre is hosting a literature event. I always attend and I schedule my online meetings to make sure that I have the time to go. Every month a new book is in focus. The book is announced some time in advance and I always make sure to read it before going to the literature event.

I always arrive as the last person, so I can sneak in and take a seat in the back of the room. The evening always starts with a few chapters from the book being read out loud by the author. Afterwards, the book is discussed. I don't participate in the discussions, but I like to listen to both the discussions and the readings. I make sure to sneak out before the evening is over. That way I don't have to deal with judgmental gazes.

I like the people who attend events at the Culture Centre. At least the few people I have noticed – often I am more attentive to how others see me than who they are.

There is a nice, older gentleman who always attends the literature events. He looks friendly and sometimes he smiles at me, but I never know how to react, so I just pretend not to notice. I watch him discreetly when he once in a while makes a comment because he seems to always have an interesting and different approach to things. I would love to talk to him because he seems like an exciting acquaintance but so far, I have not dared to.

Another person who always attends the literature nights is a woman who always has the same seat, furthest to the left in the back of the room. I have noticed that she often closes her eyes when she listens to the reading. She looks so peaceful, but when the evening is coming to an end it is as if she gets more alert and controlled. I feel the same way. I like her a lot. Maybe because she also seems out of place. I wish I dared to talk to her.

The last one I have noticed is a young man. A funny detail about him is, that he always wears gloves. But he seems very friendly. I like his smile and the way he interacts with others. I have sometimes observed him get a cup of coffee for the elderly gentleman. I wish that I also knew someone who would get coffee for me. If I got to know him, he would probably not mind getting me stuff, but I can't bring myself to take the initiative.

The literature event is the highlight of the month. I wish I could have more safe and enjoyable evenings among other people. And most of all I wish, that I had someone with whom I could share such evenings. It would be nice to be able to stay after the event was finished. I could sit at a table with other people, drink coffee and discuss the books. But I don't really know how to find the courage for this.

### Short on family

I grew up in a nice and loving home, but I seldom see my parents these days, because they moved to Spain. We chat through skype once a week. They don't understand why I see my height as a problem and just tell me to straighten my back and be proud of myself. Easy for them to say.

### Summary

Louise is a young, unusually tall woman. She thinks, that her height is her biggest problem, but actually, it is her social anxiety.

She has neck problems because she is always crouching in an attempt to look smaller than she is.

She is intelligent and good at finding solutions and connections which might not be obvious to others, but she often hides her talents because she is afraid to be different. She thinks that her surroundings judge her because of her height, so she tries to avoid attention.

Her social anxiety makes it difficult for her to do a lot of the things she loves doing, but there is one social activity that she maintains and that is the monthly literature event at the local Culture Centre. Here she can listen discretely and sit together with others without feeling seen or judged.

## Act 0 – Workshop – appendix 2

### **Casting**

Tell the players, that they are about to hear a text describing the characters and that afterwards they can tell you which character they wish to play. Remind the players that this is a feel-good scenario, so they should try to choose a character that does not feel too difficult or “close to home” to play. (A player with a phobia for germs should not, for example, play Martin.)

Read this out loud:

*Somewhere in the world, in a city filled with people, streets, parks, houses and homes, is an old house which has for a long time functioned as a culture house for the local people in the area. It has not changed much in the past 10 years, but it is nice and clean and the atmosphere is warm and friendly.*

*The culture house hosts a lot of events and one of them is a literature night, which is taking place on the first Tuesday of every month. Each month a new book is in focus. Parts of the book is being read out loud and afterwards the book is being discussed. These events have a shifting group of attendances, but there are four participants who faithfully attend each month.*

*The first one to arrive is a young man. He is in good shape, his eyes are attentive and his presence friendly, but there is also something nervous about him. He is keeping a polite distance to others; he looks slightly panicky when someone coughs and he is constantly using hand sanitizer. After arriving he immediately begins to arrange the chairs for the literature night. That is his job. He prepares the room and makes it look nice.*

*The next one to arrive is a woman with an attentive look in her eyes and a kind of precision in her movements. She always arrives at the exact same time and take the same seat. She gets a cup of coffee, adds milk and stir the coffee 16 times anti-clockwise. Then she slowly exhales and if you were to observe her closely, you would see how she slowly relaxes.*

*At this time an elderly gentleman has often arrived and sat down for a short rest on the couch in the hallway outside the room. He is nicely dressed. He has an aura of dignity where you keep your distance, but his eyes are curious and closely follows everything that is going on. If you look closely you can see how tired he is and how little energy is left in his body, but he does his best to hide it.*

*The last one to arrive is a young woman, who arrives shortly before the event starts and take a seat in the back of the room. She is unusually tall, but crouches and does her best not to draw attention. Despite her height, she is good at remaining unnoticed. She blends in and does like everybody else, but her eyes are unusually intelligent and behind the shy surface there are secret dreams and moments which no one else sees.*

*Once a month these four people meet for the literature night. They all feel like strangers. They all feel different and left out. They don't know each other yet, but they soon will.*

Shortly sum up the characters and let the players choose who they want to play:

*Martin: A helpful young man who often uses hand sanitizer.*

*Ivy: An attentive woman with precise movements who likes routines.*

*Peter: A curious, elder gentleman with tired legs.*

*Louise: A young, intelligent woman who are unusually tall and doesn't want to draw attention.*

## ***1) Curious details and player warm up***

The first exercise in this sequence is about curious details and are meant as a way to warm up the players, teach them to tell stories together and get a first impression of their characters.

Ask the players to sit down in a circle.

Ask them to take turns describing an object/situation/person which they find curious. They are welcome to let themselves inspire by the other players descriptions (but they don't have to).

Take a couple of rounds where the players in this way takes turn describing something curious.

Ask the players to start walking amongst each other.

Ask them to pay attention to how their bodies feel right now and which thoughts or emotions are running through their heads.

Ask them to start noticing details in the room that in some way seems interesting or curious.

Let them take turns to point out a detail in the room and let all the players gather around this detail and together tell a story about why this detail is special or curious (maybe it has a significant past or a secret function that no one else knows about). Ask the players to listen to one another and take their time when they tell together. They should try to focus on strange little details and to try to see the worlds in a way that is a little different without being completely outrageous.

Ask the players to sit down in a comfortable position and to close their eyes.

Ask them to find their characters and as their characters consider the following questions (make sure to pause between each question to give the players time to consider them).

1. What does your home look like? Is there a special place where you feel safe?
2. What are the curious little things you do every day?
3. What does it feel like when you leave your home? What is the first thing you see or do when you walk out your front door?
4. What do you notice in your surroundings? People, places, details?
5. Which parts of your interactions with your surroundings is it, that you find difficult or dangerous?
6. In which ways do you secretly help your surroundings?
7. What is it that you keep hoping for even though it never happens? Is there someone you hope to hear from? Something you want to do, but never do it? Something you hope will happen?

## **2) Locations and location scenes**

The purpose of the next exercise is to describe the locations. One location at a time.

The players describe the locations together while they physically show where the different details are placed in relation to each other ("The bench is here. The lake is there" and so on). You can potentially use tables and chairs to mark the different objects (or walls) and move these around for each new location.

After having described a location, the players play out a short scene at the location (keep it short, 1-2 minutes) and for each scene the players receive new information on how to play until the playstyle in the end will resemble the one used when playing Location scenes in the scenario.

### The Culture house

You set the scene by describing a couple of details about the culture house. The culture house has not changed much during the last decades, but it has a nice atmosphere.

Ask the players to describe the culture house together, while showing where the different details are in relation to each other in the room.

They take turns describing a detail or build on a detail someone else has described.

When the players have described the culture house, you ask them to each imagine the culture house seen from their characters perspective. Which little curiosity or special details would they notice?

Ask the players to find their characters and play out a subtle and silent scene where all the characters are all in the Culture House. They can interact a bit, but should primarily focus on their own character, its body language and its behaviour when being in a place where they feel secure (make the scene short 1-2 min.)

### The Supermarket

Start as before by telling about the place. The supermarket is not very big and nothing like a mall.

Let the players describe the supermarket together, still seen from their characters perspective. Then let them each imagine what curious details their character notice (or the odd things they do) within the supermarket.

Ask the players to find their characters and play out a short scene in the supermarket, this time focussing on the location and how the character act in the supermarket. They can imagine the characters little habits or routines, the feeling of being different within a public space and how their individual difficulties can cause themselves problems in this space.

### The Waiting room at the doctor's office

Start as before by setting the scene (tell the players, that there is a reception adjacent to the waiting room) and let the players describe the waiting room together. They still make the descriptions from the characters point of view and focuses on the curious small details their character has created, seen or experienced in the waiting room.

Ask the players to find their characters and play out a short scene in the waiting room, this time they should all focus on the other characters and how their own character don't dare to interact with others (and possibly how it feels that others are judging them). The playstyle is still subtle and without words and the players can use eye-contact (or the lack of eye-contact), physical distance and the way they are facing in relation to others in order to explore their characters loneliness or awkwardness.



### The Park

Start as before by setting the scene. Tell the players that the park has a bench and a small lake or stream, but that the rest are up to them. Then let the players describe the park together while still placing the different details in relation to each other and still with a focus on curious details.

Then ask two of the players to find their characters and play out a short scene in the park.

The other two players watch the scene, and can contribute by shortly playing the surrounding world (describing details about the location, describe actions or shortly playing people passing by). Focus is on the two characters in the scene, so when the other players contribute it is in order to enhance the play of these two characters.

After having played for a couple of minutes, the players shift, so that the players that where the surroundings now play their characters and vice versa.

### The bus stop

Start as before by setting the scene. Tell the players, that it is not a bus station, but just a bus stop with a bench for waiting. Then let the characters describe the scene together while placing the details in the room.

Then ask two of the players to find their characters and play out a short scene at the bus stop (make sure to pair the characters differently than in the park). These two players play their characters as in the scene before.

The other two players once again play the surrounding world and can discreetly influence the scene. This time their job is to point out small, curious details and try out how they can make these details relevant for the play of the characters in the scene.

After having played for a couple of minutes, the players shift, so that the players that where the surroundings now play their characters and vice versa.

### **3) *Everyday life scenes***

The purpose of the third sequence of exercises is to practice the possibilities in the Everyday life scenes.

In this sequence you take the role as the focus person and let the players test how to play the surrounding world.

Ask the players to stand or sit in a circle and place yourself in the middle.

Tell the players that you are now going to practice a type of scenes called “Everyday life scenes”. In the scenario the characters are going to take turns being the one in focus in the Everyday life scenes, but in order to practice how these scenes function, you will now try to play a scene with you (the facilitator) as the focus person.

Tell them, that this is Harriet (who work at the culture house) who will be the focus person, while the players will portrait Harriet’s perception of her surroundings.

Tell them that you will describe an everyday situation from Harriet’s life and that it is their job to take turns contributing with details about what Harriet is experiencing or how she perceives the situation.

They should maintain the focus on Harriet and her experiences and can for example describe:

- concrete details (“a man walks past and looks at her” or “the front door seems stuck”),
- sensuous details (“the air is cold outside”),
- thoughts (“you remember that you forgot to turn off the oven”),
- experiences (“it feels like everyone is staring at you” or “the air is heavy, almost suffocating and for a moment it feels like the world closes in on you”)

Ask them to keep the descriptions short (at least for this exercise), but also tell them, that you are just practicing, so they are welcome to test things and see what works for them.

Describe how Harriet walks out her front door in the morning (keep your descriptions short, so that the focus is on the players contribution and so that the sequence maintains a good flow). Feel free to use your own experience of leaving home as an inspiration.

Then turn to the first player and let the person add a detail about Harriet’s experience of herself or her surroundings.

Describe Harriet’s reaction to this input and then turn to the next player and let that person add a new input, which you react to and continue in this way until all four players has influenced this situation form Harriet’s everyday life.

Then take another round (still centred around Harriet), but this time ask the player to help Harriet notice the curious or wondrous elements within her surroundings. The scenario should stay within a realistic reality, but can hint to something unexplainable (a glimpse of a strangely dressed person, an unexplainable letter underneath a mat, a cat that looks like it knows something important or a sudden scent of summer appearing out of the blue).

Take another round with Harriet as the focus person and this time ask the players to describe details to Harriet which will make her feel alienated and unwelcome.

Take one last round with Harriet as the focus person and with the same themes as the last round (being alienated and unwelcome) and this time ask the players to speak louder and let the world be even more mean and cruel until the scene has reached a point where you feel, that it is enough.

## **4) The Loneliness**

The last part of act 0 is about community and loneliness. In this sequence the players practice the characters relation to their loneliness, how the Loneliness scenes are played and how the loneliness affects their body language.

Ask the players to stand closely together in the middle of the room and all holding hands.

Ask them to find their characters and to let their characters think back to a time when they felt as part of a community or felt that they had close relations.

Tell them, that they are now going to play a kind a meta-scene, where the characters will tell about the close connections or communities they have had (symbolized or embodied by the closeness to the other players) and about how the loneliness took over (symbolized by the four walls of the room).

The closer the players are to each other, the safer the characters feel but the closer they get to the walls, the more lonely the characters become.

Ask the four characters to describe the community or closeness they ones experienced.

All four characters can talk at the same time, or they can listen and be inspired by the others if they like (it is the players, not the characters who can hear the others, it is not a concrete situation that the characters are experiencing, but rather a representation of what is going on within their heads).

When the players have talked a bit about community, you ask them to slowly move away from each other while describing how the loneliness slowly took over.

When they are no longer physically in touch, you can ask them to turn towards the walls and focus on describing their loneliness and their relation to their loneliness.

When they have each reached the wall, you ask them to describe how the loneliness are part of their everyday life. It can be hard and heavy, but might also feel safe and known.

When they have talked to the walls about their loneliness for a bit, you ask them to relax for a moment and tell them that during the scenario their characters will potentially go through the opposite development. Tell them that there will be a slow development, with all the characters start by facing the walls, but slowly, if they start to trust each other, they can turn around and start to walk towards each other. And that you will guide them and tell them which steps they can take as these scenes develops.

Ask the players to find their characters and to hold on to their loneliness.

Ask them to walk around among each other while focussing on their own character.

Ask them to find the character's body language and weirdness's (bending the neck, walking carefully, use sanitizer on their hands or copy exact patterns).

Ask them to start incorporating the sense that someone is watching and judging them and to let this affect their body language.

Ask them to look around and imagine that they are surrounded by strangers who all seems normal and popular. And to open up to the sense of loneliness, of being different and have a longing to get to know someone. And to be a cast out. To miss someone to share their experiences with. And the experience of being alone with the loneliness.

Ask them to feel where in the body they can feel the loneliness gnawing.

Ask them to find a place where they can be alone away from the judging eyes of others, but also away from closeness and community.

This would be a good time to take a break. Ask the player not to talk to each other during the break.

# Summary sheet - Act 0 – appendix 3

## ***Casting***

Read the text on page 1 of the workshop (appendix 2) and let the players choose which characters they want to play.

### ***1) Curious details and player warm up***

The players sit in a circle and describe in turn a thing/person/situation that they find curious.

The players walk around the room, notice their bodies and thoughts and details that they find curious. They point to a detail and all gather around to tell a collaborate story of why this detail is curious. One after the other.

The players sit with closed eyes and considers (in character) their answer to the following questions you read aloud:

1. What does your home look like? Is there a special place where you feel safe?
2. What are the curious little things you do every day?
3. What does it feel like when you leave your home? What is the first thing you see or do when you walk out your front door?
4. What do you notice in your surroundings? People, places, details?
5. Which parts of your interactions with your surroundings is it, that you find difficult or dangerous?
6. In which ways do you secretly help your surroundings?
7. What is it that you keep hoping for even though it never happens? Is there someone you hope to hear from? Something you want to do, but never do it? Something you hope will happen?

### ***2) Locations and Location scenes***

You go through all five locations with you setting the scene, players describing the location, finding the curiosities as their characters and then playing a short scene.

The Culture house: The scene is played subtle, without words and focus on own character.

The Supermarket: The scene is played without words. Focus on the characters problems/habits in the supermarket.

The Waiting room at the doctor's office: The scene is played without words. The characters want to make contact with the others but are afraid to.

The Park: Two of the characters are in this scene, the others discreetly play the surrounding world. Switch and play again.

The Bus stop: Two of the characters are in this scene, the others play the surrounding world with a focus on curious details. Switch and play again.

### **3) *Everyday Life scenes***

The players stand in a circle with you, the facilitator, in the middle as Harriet from the Culture house. You describe how Harriet leave her home in the morning.

The players take turns coming up with details on how Harriet experience her surroundings:

- Concrete / Sensuous / Thoughts / Experiences

They go clockwise by turn and keep is short. You respond, as Harriet, to the details they describe.

In the first round you practise short comments and short responses.

In the second round you continue with the same scene, but with a focus on *curious elements*.

In the third round the focus is on making Harriet feel *alienated and unwelcome*.

In the fourth round alienated and unwelcome should be even more *mean and cruel*.

### **4) *The Loneliness***

The players stand in the middle of the room holding hands. They think back (as their characters) on a time where they experienced being part of a community or felt they had close relations. They describe these emotions simultaneously and can (as players) be inspired by what the others say.

They slowly back away from each other while they describe how loneliness took over.

When they are no longer in physical contact with each other, they turn to face the walls and start telling of their relationship with the loneliness (represented by the walls).

They start walking towards a wall each and when they reach the wall describe the loneliness in their everyday life. It may be heavy but also very familiar.

The players start walking around the room with a focus on their own character. They find the characters body language and quirkiness's.

They incorporate the feeling of being judged into their body language and imagines how everyone around them are normal and popular.

They feel the loneliness, the feeling of being an outcast, the longing of having someone to share things with and feel where in their body it is gnawing.

They find a place in the room where they can alone away from judging eyes, but also away from everyone else.

# Summary sheet act 1-4 – appendix 4

Loneliness scene

Everyday  
life scene

Location scene

**Act 1**

Alienation  
Loneliness  
Limitations

Loneliness  
(Against wall)

Supermarket  
Characters: all 4  
(No talking)

Everyday  
Ivy

Waiting room  
Characters: M + L

Everyday  
Peter

Busstop  
Characters: L + P

Everyday  
Louise

Park  
Characters: I + P

Everyday  
Martin

Culture house  
Characters: all 4

**Act 2**

Insecurity  
Reaching out  
Hope

Loneliness  
(Go towards middle)

Waiting room  
Characters: L + P

Everyday  
Louise

Supermarket  
Characters: P + M

Everyday  
Peter

Busstop  
Characters: M + I

Everyday  
Martin

Park  
Characters: I + L

Everyday  
Ivy

Culture house  
Characters: all 4

**Act 3**

Acknowledgement  
Community  
Helpfulness

Loneliness  
(Talk to others)

Waiting room  
Characters: L + M + P

Supermarket  
Characters: M + I + L

Busstop  
Characters: I + L + P

Park  
Characters: P + M + I

Culture house  
Characters: all 4

**Act 4**

Equal minded  
Safety  
Joy

Loneliness  
(Hold hands)

Everyday  
Martin  
(Maybe  
others)

Everyday  
Ivy  
(Maybe  
others)

Everyday  
Louise  
(Maybe  
others)

Everyday  
Peter  
(Maybe  
others)

Open scene  
Characters: all 4

Loneliness  
(epilogue)

# Scene Catalogue – appendix 5

## Act 1 (45-50 minutes)

**Themes:** *Alienation, Loneliness, Limitations* (Remember to place them visible for the players)

### Loneliness scene: Act 1

#### Setup

- The players start the scene in each corner *facing* the wall.

#### Tell the players

- The walls represent the loneliness.
- The players can turn away from the wall to show that they turn their back on loneliness.

#### Description of the scene

- The scene starts by you asking the question:
  - How do you feel about *your* loneliness today?
- When the scene ends, ask the players to look at each other's placement in the room and which way they are facing.

### Location scene: The Supermarket

#### Setup

- All 4 characters are in the scene.

#### Tell the players

- The characters cannot speak to each other in this scene. They can recognize each other and nod.

#### Description of the scene

- It is the day before a bank holiday and the supermarket is filled with people.
- The line for the cashier goes all the way to the back of the shop.
- Many wares you want to buy are sold out and the shelves are empty.
- Something smelly is spilled on the floor.

### Everyday life scene: Ivy

#### Setup

- The player of Ivy stands in the middle with the other players around them.

#### Tell the players

- The players describing the surroundings, comes with input to the world, in clockwise order.
- Themes for act 1 are: *Alienation, Loneliness, Limitations.*

#### Description of the scene

- Ask Ivy to describe her routines at home and how she gets out of the front door?

### Location scene: The Waiting room

#### Setup

- Martin and Louise are in the scene.
- The others can be the surroundings.

#### Tell the players

- From now on the characters can speak together in the location scenes.

#### Description of the scene

- Two snotty and coughing kids are playing in the play area.
- The doctor is at least 45 minutes late.
- There are noise coming from both a radio and the ventilation.

### Everyday life scene: Peter

#### Setup

- The player of Peter stands in the middle with the other players around them.

#### Tell the players

- The players describing the surroundings, comes with input to the world, in clockwise order.
- Themes for act 1 are: *Alienation, Loneliness, Limitations.*

#### Description of the scene

- Ask Peter to describe his routines at home and how he gets out of the front door?



### Location scene: The Bus stop

#### Setup

- Louise and Peter are in the scene.
- The others can be the surroundings.

#### Description of the scene

- There is already someone sitting on the bench smoking.
- There is vomit in the corner that reeks.
- An entire class of school children walk by the bus stop.

### Everyday life scene: Louise

#### Setup

- The player of Louise stands in the middle with the other players around them.

#### Tell the players

- The players describing the surroundings, comes with input to the world, in clockwise order.
- Themes for act 1 are: *Alienation, Loneliness, Limitations.*

#### Description of the scene

- Ask Louise to describe her routines at home and how she gets out of the front door?

### Location scene: The Park

#### Setup

- Ivy and Peter are in the scene.
- The others can be the surroundings.

#### Description of the scene

- There is bird poo all over the bench.
- Garbage has been tossed on the ground in front of the bench because the bin is full.
- The water from the lake/stream smells rotten.

### **Everyday life scene: Martin**

#### **Setup**

- The player of Martin stands in the middle with the other players around them.

#### **Tell the players**

- The players describing the surroundings, comes with input to the world, in clockwise order.
- Themes for act 1 are: *Alienation, Loneliness, Limitations.*

#### **Description of the scene**

- Ask Martin to describe his routines at home and how he gets out of the front door?

### **Location scene: The Culture house**

#### **Setup**

- All 4 characters are in the scene.

#### **Description of the scene**

- The coffee machine is broken and there is no coffee.
- There is no cake today either, since Debbie who always bakes is sick today.
- The Culture house employee Harriet (played by you) tells that the author for tonight is delayed by 15 mins.

## Act 2 (45-50 min.)

**Themes:** *Insecurity, Reaching out, Hope* (Remember to place them visible for the players)

### Loneliness scene: Act 2

#### Setup

- The players start where they ended in the previous Loneliness scene (Facing the wall or not).

#### Tell the players

- The walls represent the loneliness.
- The players can now move towards the middle of the room to show where they are in relation to the loneliness.

#### Description of the scene

- The scene starts by you asking the question:
  - How do you feel about *your* loneliness today?
- When the scene ends, ask the players to look at each other's placement in the room and which way they are facing.

### Location scene: The Waiting room

#### Setup

- Louise and Peter are in the scene.
- The others can be the surroundings.

#### Description of the scene

- It is quiet in the waiting room.
- Peter and Louise are the only ones in the room.
- The receptionist tells them that the doctor is on time today.

### Everyday life scene: Louise

#### Setup

- The player of Louise stands in the middle with the other players around them.

#### Tell the players

- The players describing the surroundings, comes with input to the world, in clockwise order.
- Themes for act 2 are: *Insecurity, Reaching out, Hope*

#### Description of the scene

- Ask Louise how she helps someone in her everyday life unnoticed?

## Location scene: The Supermarket

### Setup

- Peter and Martin are in the scene.
- The others can be the surroundings.

### Description of the scene

- New wares have arrived and are being shelved, so there are boxes and wares in the aisles.
- All of the shopping baskets are all the way over by the cashier.

## Everyday life scene: Peter

### Setup

- The player of Peter stands in the middle with the other players around them.

### Tell the players

- The players describing the surroundings, comes with input to the world, in clockwise order.
- Themes for act 2 are: *Insecurity*, *Reaching out*, *Hope*

### Description of the scene

- Ask Peter how he helps someone in his everyday life unnoticed?

## Location scene: The Bus stop

### Setup

- Martin and Ivy are in the scene.
- The others can be the surroundings.

### Description of the scene

- It is raining.
- The bus is late and the display just shows 12 minutes all the time.

## Everyday life scene: Martin

### Setup

- The player of Martin stands in the middle with the other players around them.

### Tell the players

- The players describing the surroundings, comes with input to the world, in clockwise order.
- Themes for act 2 are: *Insecurity*, *Reaching out*, *Hope*

### Description of the scene

- Ask Martin how he helps someone in his everyday life unnoticed?

### Location scene: The Park

#### Setup

- Ivy and Louise are in the scene.
- The others can be the surroundings.

#### Description of the scene

- Three friends are sitting on the grass a bit away having a picnic.
- They are laughing and toasting.

### Everyday life scene: Ivy

#### Setup

- The player of Ivy stands in the middle with the other players around them.

#### Tell the players

- The players describing the surroundings, comes with input to the world, in clockwise order.
- Themes for act 2 are: *Insecurity*, *Reaching out*, *Hope*

#### Description of the scene

- Ask Ivy how she helps someone in her everyday life unnoticed?

### Location scene: The Culture house

#### Setup

- All 4 characters are in the scene.

#### Description of the scene

- The place is crowded with people tonight.
- There are four chairs next to one another that have a “reserved” sign on them.
- Ask Martin:
  - Is it you who have reserved the chairs for the four of you?

## Act 3 (35-40 min.)

**Themes:** *Acknowledgement, Community, Helpfulness* (Remember to place them visible for the players)

### Loneliness scene: Act 3

#### Setup

- The players start where they ended in the previous Loneliness scene (Facing the wall or not and with the same distance to the wall/ middle of the room as before).

#### Tell the players

- The walls represent the loneliness.
- Players can now look at each other and maybe obtain eye contact. They can talk to the other characters but cannot have a conversation.

#### Description of the scene

- The scene starts by you asking the question:
  - How do you feel about *your* loneliness today?
- When the scene ends, ask the players to look at each other's placement in the room and which way they are facing.

### Location scene: The Waiting room

#### Setup

- Louise, Martin and Peter are in the scene.

#### Tell the players

- The last player is *not allowed* to play in the scene in this act.

#### Description of the scene

- Louise has been asked by her boss to participate in a dinner with one of their clients.
- They will eat and drink wine.
- She can easily talk about work, but is unsure about the social aspects of the dinner (Ex. When is an appropriate time to end such a night?)
- They will see how tall she really is.
- After the scene ends ask Louise if she will follow some of the advice she got or help she was offered.

### Location scene: The Supermarket

#### Setup

- Martin, Ivy and Louise are in the scene.

#### Tell the players

- The last player is *not allowed* to play in the scene in this act.

#### Description of the scene

- Martin has to get a haircut at the hairdresser and is nervous about the hygiene.
- A brush at the hairdressers has been in contact with a lot of different hair.
- A hairdryer spreads bacteria all over the salon.
- The scissors definitely do not get washed between customers.
- After the scene ends ask Martin if he will follow some of the advice he got or help he was offered.

### Location scene: The Bus Stop

#### Setup

- Ivy, Louise and Peter are in the scene.

#### Tell the players

- The last player is *not allowed* to play in the scene in this act.

#### Description of the scene

- Ivy has to take care of her sisters' dog for 14 days.
- She will have both food and dog basket, but dogs are chaotic and demands attention.
- It must be feed and walked in both the morning and evening.
- And in which room should it sleep in its basket?
- After the scene ends ask Ivy if she will follow some of the advice she got or help she was offered.

### Location scene: The Park

#### Setup

- Peter, Martin and Ivy are in the scene.

#### Tell the players

- The last player is *not allowed* to play in the scene in this act.

#### Description of the scene

- Peter is being pressured by his doctor to begin using a Walker.
- The doctor is pressuring because Peter has fallen several times during the last month and a walker can make his life easier and safer.
- But Peter does not like assistive devices, like a walker.
  
- After the scene ends ask Peter if he will follow some of the advice he got or help he was offered.

### Location scene: The Culture house

#### Setup

- All 4 characters are in the scene.

#### Description of the scene

- There is no one but the four at the culture house yet.
- When the characters are all there the culture employee Harriet enters and tells them that:
  - The Literature events are cancelled permanently.
  - They will be move to a location in the big city far away from the culture house.
- She then leaves the room and let the characters react. (Don't linger in the scene as Harriet, as it is the characters that need to find out what they are going to do amongst themselves.)



## Act 4 (20-25 min.)

**Themes:** *Joy, Safety, Equal minded* (Remember to place them visible for the players)

### Loneliness scene: Act 4

#### Setup

- The players start where they ended in the previous Loneliness scene (Facing the wall or not and with the same distance to the wall/ middle of the room as before).

#### Tell the players

- The walls represent loneliness.
- The Players can now take each other's hands to express who they feel close to.

#### Description of the scene

- The scene starts by you asking the question:
  - How do you feel about *your* loneliness today?
- When the scene ends, ask the players to look at each other's placement in the room and which way they are facing and are some holding hands.

### Everyday life scene: Martin

#### Setup

- The player of Martin stands in the middle with the other players around them.

#### Tell the players

- The players describing the surroundings, comes with input to the world, in clockwise order.
- Themes for act 4 are: *Joy, Safety, Equal minded*.
- In this act, the other players can choose if they want to enter the scene as their character.

#### Description of the scene

- Martin is in the Waiting room.
- The receptionist is kind and friendly today.
- There is no noise from the radio/ventilation.

### Everyday life scene: Ivy

#### Setup

- The player of Ivy stands in the middle with the other players around them.

#### Tell the players

- The players describing the surroundings, comes with input to the world, in clockwise order.
- Themes for act 4 are: *Joy, Safety, Equal minded.*
- In this act, the other players can choose if they want to enter the scene as their character.

#### Description of the scene

- Ivy is in the Supermarket.
- There are no other customers.
- The employees are helpful and smiling.

### Everyday life scene: Louise

#### Setup

- The player of Louise stands in the middle with the other players around them.

#### Tell the players

- The players describing the surroundings, comes with input to the world, in clockwise order.
- Themes for act 4 are: *Joy, Safety, Equal minded.*
- In this act, the other players can choose if they want to enter the scene as their character.

#### Description of the scene

- Louise stands at the Bus stop.
- There is no traffic.
- There is a new wall painting on the building on the other side of the road.

### Everyday life scene: Peter

#### Setup

- The player of Peter stands in the middle with the other players around them.

#### Tell the players

- The players describing the surroundings, comes with input to the world, in clockwise order.
- Themes for act 4 are: *Joy, Safety, Equal minded.*
- In this act, the other players can choose if they want to enter the scene as their character.

#### Description of the scene

- Peter is in the Park.
- All the flowers are blooming.
- A new bench has been installed opposite the old one, so now you can sit opposite each other.

## Open scene

### Tell the players

- This is an open scene. It is completely up to them where they are and who is there.

### Description of the scene

- It is the night there used to be a Literature event at the Culture house.
- The scene starts by you asking the question:
  - Where are each one of you?
- If the players don't make suggestions you could ask them:
  - Has someone invited some of you to something? Over for coffee? More reading?

## Loneliness scene: The Ending

### Setup

- The players start by standing in a circle holding each other's hands.

### Tell the players

- This scene is the epilogue for the scenario.
- If the characters keep on seeing the others you move closer together.
- If you do not, then slowly back away and let go of the other's hands.
- If you return to loneliness then return all the way to the wall.

Alienation

1

Loneliness

1

Limitations

1

Insecurity

2

Hope

2

Reaching out

2

Helpfulness

3

Acknowledgement

3

Community

3

Safety

4

Joy

4

Equal minded

4

## Pitch – appendix 7

Title: The Wondrous

Writers: Nina Runa Essendrop & Tina Heebøll Arbjørn

Three words: Feelgood, loneliness, community

We all experience the world in slightly different ways. Some experience it as frightening and dangerous, others as wondrous and nice. The four characters in *The Wondrous* all experience life in ways that differ from the norm, and that makes them feel left out. They find it difficult to reach out to others. They don't know each other yet, but they soon will. *The Wondrous* is their story and the story about the way in which small gestures can make a big difference in other people's lives.

Through a few set locations we will follow how their lives slowly intertwine. We follow their journey where a careful nod turns into a greeting and a "can I bring you a cup of coffee?" We will see how they experience the world around them changing from difficult and alienating to helpful and wondrous.

This is a scenario about discovering others who also battle loneliness and slowly engaging in their lives, even though it is hard. And about daring to invite others into your life with all what this brings of vulnerability and strangeness.

### About the writers:

Nina and Tina have attended Fastaval for many years, and both have written scenarios for the convention. Besides that, Nina designs Blackbox scenarios, larps, interactive theatre pieces and workshops all over the world. Tina has been scenario coordinator and Otto judge at Fastaval several times. They both find that the world can be wondrous. And they both love the movie "Amélie".

### Info:

Genre: Feelgood drama

Participants: 4 players & 1 gamemaster

Time: 4 hours

Language: Danish and English

Age: 15 years+

How much to read: 2500 words (about 4 pages) per player

Won the Otto award for Best Story at Fastaval 2019 and got three nominations in other categories.